

Jim Treadway's Price

A Political Story of Today

By A. Bart Horton

THE I. X. L. Railroad maintained its usual lobby that winter at the Legislature. Tom Gordon, good fellow and prince of lobbyists was in charge, and it was, no doubt, due to his influence that any pending legislation adverse to the railroad interests had failed of passage for the past four or five years. It was also undoubtedly due to the same influence that a number of measures favored by the railroads had passed. The I. X. L. Railroad had become the clearing house for the other railroads where their interests were identical. A two cent a mile rate bill had been introduced early in that session and had been in the hands of the committee for several weeks. It had just been reported to the House favorably.

At the headquarters of the I. X. L. lobby at the Nevill House, which was ostensibly Tom Gordon's suite of rooms, there was an atmosphere of exceeding jubilation. This particular suite of rooms had been selected with the utmost care, and possessed features peculiarly advantageous for his particular purpose. There were four rooms to the suite, which was on the second floor, and the first room was a corner room with two entrances. This room and the adjoining room were reception rooms. The third room was Tom Gordon's private bedroom, and the last room was his sanctum, to which only the extreme elect were ever admitted. As this room had a private staircase entrance but few people knew that it belonged to that suite.

The newly elected Vice-President and General Manager of the I. X. L. Railroad and Tom Gordon were in consultation in this room. The General Manager was regarded in the railroad world as the coming man. He had been secured from one of the big western railroads and although comparatively young in years, undoubtedly possessed extraordinary executive ability.

"I am expecting George Wells, one of the political bosses and big men in the state, in a few moments," said Tom Gordon. "He has worked hand in hand with us for some time."

Just then there was a tap at the door leading to the private entrance, and Tom Gordon went over and opened it, and George Wells entered the room.

Large of frame, with power and determination written in every line of his features George Wells had become a leader of his party in state politics. His face was flushed with anger, as he strode into the room, nodding curtly to Gordon as he caught sight of the stranger seated at the table.

"Mr. Wells," said Tom, "permit me the pleasure of introducing to you Mr. White, our new General Manager. I have been outlining some of the work we have to do this winter in the Legislature in order to protect our interests."

George Wells shook hands with the General Manager, then turning to Gordon said, "Yes, and it is because of some of that very work that I am here tonight to talk with you," as he spoke, his face grew redder, and his tones displayed intense anger. "Damn it, man! Didn't I tell you that I had reasons of my own for not attempting to reach Jim Treadway in any manner at all?"

Tom Gordon's face reddened at the tones used to him, but there was exultation in his voice when he said, "Have we got him? I was not certain as I have not heard from Meyers yet."

"Got him? Yes, you have got him," replied Wells. "You have not only got him, but you have broken the heart of one of the squarest men I ever knew; the man I had in mind for Governor. In fact, the only man that we could have won with next fall." Turning to Mr. White, he said, "They talk about politicians being grafters and being crooked. Why, the most crooked politician that ever lived is a piker compared with your big men in railroads. I have been in politics a great many years, and have been successful mainly, I believe, because I have been a man of my word and have tried to be square. In all that time I have never yet bought a man. Men have done my bidding because of some favor they expected or because of some favor that I had done for them. I have sold my influence,

but this influence has been my stock in trade; just as the merchant has a stock in trade. I have never yet, however, sold that influence where I thought that it would really cause distress to any single individual or to the public. There are times when the public demanded or thought they demanded certain measures that might prove beneficial to them. As a practical man, I have always weighed the question, and have found out in most cases that those benefits did not actually exist. It has been my experience that a practical politician, well versed in municipal and public affairs, who is comparatively honest, can give the people a far better administration than the average business man. Why, who would make the politician dishonest, if it were not for the temptations thrown in his path by the business man or corporation who desires some special measure and who, to save time and trouble, goes to the political leader to gain his end."

"This is quite a dissertation on politics, Mr. White, but I am good and sore. Jim Treadway has been one of the few men that I have admired and respected, and he has ability sufficient to make him one of the big men in our country, and yet a dirty crook, the tool of you, Gordon, gets him. I just left Jim Treadway's room, over at the Northern Hotel. He called me by phone and told me that he wanted to see me. When I went into the room I scarcely knew him. His face plainly showed that he had passed through an ordeal of the most severe manner. When he shook hands with me I was shocked. That firm, manly Jim Treadway grip, so well known, which always makes it a pleasure to shake hands with him, was gone. He threw his hand over my shoulder and said in tones that trembled with agitation: 'They have reached me at last, George.'"

"What are you talking about, Jim? What's the matter with you?"

"The I. X. L. people have gotten me. You know I have fought for this two cent bill both in committee and in every other way, despite their overtures and their threats. They could not reach me personally, but the dirty crooks went after my boy. I sent for you to tell you this much, George, but I am too upset to talk any more about it. Go over and ask Tom Gordon the story, he will tell it to you."

"I saw that it was best to leave him alone, and I am over here now to hear the details."

The General Manager, who had been a silent auditor to these remarks said, "Mr. Wells, ever since I left college I have been a railroad man and have had little to do with politics. We Western railroad men have had about all that we could attend to in building up and managing our roads, without paying much attention to the political end of it. We have had our legislative fights, but that end of it was usually looked after by our Eastern capitalists. I went to college with your Jim Treadway, in fact he was one of my chums there, and he had the reputation of being one of the squarest men in college. I knew him to be the soul of honor. I have not heard directly from him or seen him for years. I knew that he was in your Legislature here. What's the story of this deal, Gordon?"

Gordon answered: "Meyers is probably outside, I'll send for him, and he can tell you all. Of course, you know, Mr. White, that we sometimes have a pretty rocky road to travel, men come here opposed to railroads and corporations, without any good reason for it, excepting a stubborn prejudice, and it has been up to us to overcome this prejudice. Sometimes we are able to do it through argument, more often through financial consideration, once in a while we are compelled to adopt other means."

White nodded, "I understand. Get Meyers."

Gordon went out and returned with a short, heavy-set man, whose frank and open countenance was somewhat marred by eyes that were small and fox-like. "Meyers this is Mr. White, the new General Manager of our road. Mr. Wells you know Mr. Meyers is one of my assistants. Joe, I want to tell these gentlemen the complete history of this Treadway deal."

"All right, Mr. Gordon, you will remember that after you had failed to reach Treadway here

you told me to go over to his home town, and see if I could dig up anything of his past, or find any other possible way of getting him. He owns a nice farm and is a lawyer of exceptional ability, as you all know. He was a man of exceptional honesty, well fitted to take a high place at the bar, but he has devoted his talents towards aiding his friends and neighbors and consequently has not gotten very rich at it. He is married and has two children, a girl and boy. The boy's education was finished at an agricultural college, with the idea of putting him in charge of the farm. Treadway's idea, however, was to give him a couple of years in commercial work, so that he would be a fairly well equipped business man when he went on the farm, and could apply business methods to farm life. Before Treadway's nomination to the Legislature the boy secured a position at our station at home, with the idea of acquiring some knowledge of shipping and of railroad work. I found him to be a bright and manly fellow who had been kept at home pretty closely. I was there ostensibly as a man of means and I sent for a man named Johnson in our employ, who was about thirty-five years old and who had a reputation for being adept at cards. I instructed Johnson to make the acquaintance of young Treadway and to show him a good time generally, that he was not to know me and he was to manage an introduction as strangers, that if possible he was to arrange to get young Treadway to playing cards. My scheme worked out in great shape. Young Treadway refused Johnson's proposition for a game of cards once or twice, but finally one evening when he was not quite sober he fell for it, and we had several games with one or two other men in the town participating and young Treadway won. A little more than a week ago I saw to it that the cashier of the I. X. L. Railroad there was promoted to another station and young Treadway was given the job. You can imagine the rest of the story, gentlemen. On last Saturday night we played and young Treadway lost over a hundred dollars, and I was one of the principal winners. He asked me to wait until Monday and stated that he had some money in the building association, which he would try to draw out then, or that Tuesday was his monthly pay day, when he could pay it from his wages. I told him that I must have my money as I was leaving town Sunday morning and intimated that if he did not have the money to lose that he did not have any business playing cards and that it would not be a good thing for the company to know that he had been playing. My talk was of such a nature that it had the effect I desired and he met me, just before train time the next morning at the station and gave me the money. Early Monday morning our auditor came in unexpectedly, of course, to him, but not to me, checked up his accounts and found him short just the amount he had paid me. The auditor who had had his instructions, at first threatened the boy with arrest, although he told him that he had more than enough in the building association, of his own to cover up the amount. The matter was finally settled by the boy agreeing to come to the State Capitol with the auditor and explain the matter to his father. When they reached here they went direct to Jim Treadway's room and the story was told him. Treadway offered to make good at once, but, of course, that wasn't what we were after, and the final result was that the auditor agreed not to prosecute the boy if Jim Treadway would vote against the bill, that he said was his only alternative. It seems, however, that the boy told his father the whole story in full and my name was mentioned. When the boy described me to Treadway he saw through the whole thing at once. At any rate he has promised to vote against the bill." And Meyer beamed on his audience, for he felt that he had landed a big thing for his road.

Wells looked at him for a moment and then said: "Meyers, you are a contemptible cur, in all my dealings in politics I have never condescended to such a trick as that, but I want to tell both you and Gordon that if in the future

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